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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **USDA Provides 75-100% Cost-Share to Restore and Protect Wetlands – Sign up Today!**

*Lakewood, CO* – The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recently announced the availability of **\$2.1 million** through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) to help private landowners restore, enhance, and protect one of our most precious natural resources.

**Applications received through December 16, 2005, will be considered for the limited 2006 funding.**

WRP is a voluntary program. Landowners who choose to participate may sell a conservation easement or enter into a cost-share restoration agreement with USDA. The landowner voluntarily limits future use of the land, yet retains private ownership. WRP offers three options including permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost-share agreements of a 10-year minimum duration.

Land entered into a permanent conservation easement will receive the lesser payment of either 1) the agricultural value of the land, 2) an established payment cap, or 3) an amount offered by the landowner. In addition to paying for the easement, USDA pays 100 percent of the costs to restore the wetland.

The 30-year conservation easement offers payment of 75 percent of what would be paid for the permanent easement and also pays 75 percent of the restoration costs.

The restoration cost-share agreement re-establishes degraded or lost wetland habitat. This contract is usually in place for a minimum of 10 years. Under this agreement USDA pays 75 percent of the cost of the restoration activity. This agreement does not place an easement on the property, and the landowner provides the restoration site without reimbursement.

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*“WRP offers a financial incentive to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal agricultural land,” says Dennis Alexander, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist and WRP Program Manager. “When land may not be the most productive landscape for traditional agricultural uses, it may serve a greater purpose as it pertains to wildlife and the environmental ecosystem.”*

Wetlands host more than 5,000 plant species, provide natural pollution control by filtering chemicals and nutrients out of water flowing to aquifers, and serve as breeding grounds for more than 12 million ducks annually. For more information on how to apply for WRP funds, please contact your local conservation district or a [NRCS field office](#) located in the USDA Service Center servicing your community.

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